

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIE-00  
NSCE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 HA-05 /055 W  
-----018583 272232Z /66  
O 272127Z DEC 77  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7603

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTIAGO 10278

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, CI  
SUBJECT: CHILE'S NATIONAL CONSULTATION: GETTING UNDER WAY

REFS: (A) SANTIAGO 10215 (B) SANTIAGO 10227

1. SUMMARY: THE PINOCHET ADMINISTRATION IS GEARING UP ITS CAMPAIGN TO ENSURE OVERWEHELMING ENDORSEMENT FOR THE PROPOSAL TO BE VOTED JANUARY 4. CIVILIAN OPPONENTS HAVE BEGUN TO DEFINE THEIR STAND: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS ALL HAVE SEEMINGLY REACHED SIMILAR CONCLUSIONS AND ARE URGING A "NO" VOTE. ATTENTION NOW CENTERS ON EVENTS WITHIN THE MILITARY ITSELF. THE AIR FORCE AND NAVY CONTINUE TO OPPOSE PINOCHET'S PLEBISCITE BECAUSE THEY SEE THIS AS HIS MOVE TO ELIMINATE THE JUNTA, AND THE CARABINEROS MAY BE DIVIDED. SHOULD JUNTA NITY CRACK, AS NOW THREATENS, THE SITUATION COULD BECOME FLUID INDEED. END SUMMARY.

2. THE GOC HAS TAKEN A NUMBER OF STEPS TO ENSURE A LARGE VOTER TURNOUT AND TO FORECLOSE THE OPPOSITION'S OPTIONS TO CAMPAIGN FOR ABSTENTIONS OR BLANK BALLOTING. ALTHOUGH THE FINAL "RULES OF THE GAME" HAVE YET TO APPEAR THE FOLLOWING DEVICES PROBABLY WILL BE USED:

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-- NATIONAL IDENTITY CARDS WILL BE VOID UNLESS MARKED TO SHOW THAT THE BEARER HAS VOTED (FOR THE FIRST TIME PUTTING TEETH INTO THE OBLIGATION TO VOT);

-- BLANK BALLOTS WILL BE COUNTED AS "YES" VOTES.

3. THE GOC ALSO HAS UNOFFICIALLY SUGGESTED SOME

MECHANISMS TO HELP BUFFER IT FROM CERTAIN CRIES OF FRAUD:

-- A POSSIBLE ELECTORAL TRIBUNAL OF EX-PRESIDENTS (INCLUDING FREI) AND EX-CHIEF JUSTICES OF THE SUPREME COURT; AND

-- THE POSSIBLE INVITATION TO OAS MEMBERS, THE OAS ITSELF, OR THE LOCAL DIPLOMATIC CORPS TO OBSERVE THE PROCESS.

4. MEANWHILE THE GOVERNMENT HAS STARTED TO RALLY IS CIVIAN SUPPORTER. SANTIAGO 10273 REPORTS THE "NATIONAL CIVIC FRONT'S" LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER. THE MEDIA CONTAIN A BARRAGE OF PRO-GOC ADVERTISEMENTS, AND PRO-PINOCHET FLYERS HAVE APPEARED WIDELY. THE GOC LINE SO FAR IS TO STICK WITH THE NATIONALISM ISSUE AND DOWNPLAY THE EXPLICIT ENDORSEMENT OF PINOCHET'S REGIME CONTAINED IN THE QUESTION AS PHRASED (PINOCHET TOLD THE ASSEMBLED MEDIA DECEMBER 27 THAT THE CONSULTATION HAS "NOTHING TO DO WITH INTERNAL POLITICS OR POLICIES" SAID "LA SEGUNDA'S" FRONT PAGE BANNER).

5. OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSAL HAS BEGUN TO TAKE SHAPE. AFTER LENGTHY DEBATE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS CONFIDENTIAL

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PUT OUT A FLYER STATING THAT THE CONDITIONS SURROUNDING THE PLEBISCITE MAKE IT A FARCE; THAT THE QUESTION TO BE VOTED IS REALLY TWO SEPARATE ONES AND THAT CHILEANS ARE BEING ASKED TO ENDORSE PINOCHET'S POLICIES NOT THE QUESTION OF FOREIGN INTERVENTION. THE FLYER SEEMS TO RECOMMEND ABSTENTION FROM THE POLLS, BUT RATHER ABRUPTLY CONCLUDES WITH THE RECOMMENDATION TO VOTE "NO". ALREADY TWO WINGS OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY ARE SAID TO HAVE CIRCULATED FLYERS URGING A "NO" VOTE. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE NOT YET MADE THEIR FORMAL STAND; WE HAVE HEARD, HOWEVER, THAT THEY, TOO, WILL URGE A NEGATIVE VOTE AND WILL WORK HARD TO DRUM UP PARTICIPATION. NEITHER THE CHURCH NOR DEMOCRATIC LABOR HAS PRONOUNCED ITSELF. EX-PRESIDENT FREI IS PLAYING IT COOL SO FAR.

6. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TOYING WITH THE IDEA OF GIVING OPPONENTS SOME ACCESS TO THE MEDIA BUT HAS STOOD FOURSQUARE ON ITS INSISTENCE THAT THE "POLITICAL RECESS" BE "RESPECTED". ABOUT A DOZEN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT YOUTHS WERE DETAINED FOR HOURS DECEMBER 27 FOR DISSEMINATING THE PDC FLYER.

7. THE PDC HOPES TO BE ABLE TO MONITOR THE RESULTS AT SOME 500 VOTING TABLES IN THE SANTIAGO AREA (WE DO NOT YET KNOW HOW MANY THERE WILL BE IN ALL) AND LET THE PARTY'S ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PROVINCES DO THE BEST THEY CAN TO COVER THE RESULTS OUTSIDE SANTIAGO. ONCE COUNTED AT THE VOTING TABLE THE BALLOTS AND TALLIES WILL GO INTO OFFICIAL GOC CHANNELS WHERE VERIFICATION AND CONTROL WOULD APPEAR TO BE DIFFICULT.

8. GOC PROCEDURES TO ENSURE THE "RIGHT" VOTE AND THE MACHINATIONS OF VARIOUS CIVILIAN GROUPS HAVE BEEN OVERSHADOWED BY RUMORS OF SERIOUS DISSENSION WITHIN THE JUNTA AND THE ARMED FORCES. A LETTER  
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PURPORTEDLY FROM AIR FORCE CINC AND JUNTA MEMBER LEIGH HAS BEEN WIDELY CIRCULATED TO THE MEDIA AND

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIE-00  
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O 272127Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7604

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANTIAGO 10278

EVEN GIVEN TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. WE ARE REPORTING SEPARATELY THE CONTENT OF THE LEIGH LETTER. NAVY CINC AND JUNTA MEMBER MERINO ALSO IS REPORTED TO HAVE SENT PINOCHET A STIFF MEMORANDUM EXPLAINING WHY THE NAVY OPPOSES THE IDEA OF A PLEBISCITE. WE HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED A COPY OF THE TEXT BUT IT IS BELIEVED TO BE AT LEAST AS TOUGH AS LEIGH'S. THE CARABINERO POSITION IS RUMORED TO BE

UNDER DISCUSSION, BUT THIS MAY BE MORE HOPE THAN FACT -- GENERAL MENDOZA ALLEGEDLY SUPPORTED PINOCHET'S DECISION DURING A LENGTHY JUNTA MEETING DECEMBER 21. AT ROOT LEIGH AND MERINO FEAR THAT ARMED WITH A POPULAR ENDORSEMENT PINOCHET WILL FURTHER CONSOLIDATE HIS POSITION AT THE EXPENSE OF THE JUNTA AND WILL BE ENCOURAGED TO PURSUE AN EVEN TOUGHER LINE REGARDING DISSENT.

9. COMMENT: CLEARLY WHAT PINOCHET AND HIS ADVISERS INTEND IS A QUICK VOTE BASED ON NATIONALISTIC EMOTIONS, YET PLAYABLE AFTER THE VENT AS A LEGITIMIZATION OF HIS RULE. THEY WANT IT FOR DOMESTIC REASONS AND HAVE ESSENTIALLY WRITTEN OFF FURTHER DAMAGE TO THE GOC'S INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. WITH AN OVERWHELMING VOTE OF CONFIDENCE BEHIND HIM, PINOCHET'S BARGAINING POSITION -- WITHIN THE JUNTA AND WITHIN CONFIDENTIAL

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CHILE -- WILL BE STRONGER. TACTICALLY, PINOCHET HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL IN FORECLOSING MIDDLE GROUND OPTIONS, THUS DRIVING HIS CIVILIAN CRITICS AND HIS ENEMIES INTO THE SAME CAMP.

10. THE NOW QUASI-PUBLIC OBJECTIONS OF THE AIR FORCE AND NAVY HAVE DEFINITELY ADDED A NEW DIMENSION TO THE SITUATION. ALTHOUGH LOCAL MEDIA ARE AFRAID TO PRINT THE LETTERS, IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL THE FULL TEXTS GET OUT -- EITHER ABROAD OR THROUGH CRACKS IN CENSORSHIP HERE. WE CANNOT BE SURE WHAT THE DISSENTING SERVICES ARE REALLY AFTER, BUT THEY HAVE ALREADY RAISED THE STAKES FOR PINOCHET AS WELL AS THEMSELVES.  
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